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PREDECESSOR AGENCY TO CIA

OSS Advocated Aid to Ho in 1945, New Book Reveals

STATINTL

BERKELEY (UPI)—Although the Central Intelligence Agency has become the bugaboo of American leftists, its World War II predecessor, the Office of Strategic Services, was a lonely voice for support of leftist anticolonial organizations, according to a new history of the OSS.

The World War II spy outfit, says author R. Harris Smith, was a collection of distinguished intellectuals and madcap pranksters who sometimes saw things in a clearer light than their bosses in Washington.

The first American casualty of the Vietnam war, Smith says, was OSS operative Col. Peter Dewey, killed by machine-gun fire on Sept. 23, 1945, near Saigon. Dewey was shot while passing through a Viet Minh roadblock. His job: Liaison man with the Viet Minh. He was killed, Smith claims, because the Vietnamese sentry mistakenly thought he was French.

The OSS was an advocate of extending aid to the Viet Minh in their

fight first against Japanese occupiers and later against the French who tried to reclaim their Indochinese empire.

In his book "OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency," published today by the University of California Press, the 25-year-old Berkeley graduate student observes: "Long before the Japanese surrender, OSS planners had suggested that 'American cooperation with patriotic, subversive revolutionary groups of Southeastern Asia would appreciably increase our offensive power against Japan.'"

Thus began the brief American association with Nguyen Ai Quoc, sprung from the clutches of Chiang Kai-shek's secret police chief by the Americans.

Quoc later took the name Ho Chi Minh.

Ho and his professor-general Vo Nguyen Giap slowly built their organization, cooperating with the OSS, and sabotaged the Japanese and

Viet⁶⁶ French. Ho's Viet Minh seems to have been the only organization for which Americans in Asia had any respect.

Smith's book is based on more than 200 interviews with former OSS operatives from all theaters of war and on nearly all available documents, some of them secret. It covers all OSS activities in all the theaters of World War II and unveils fascinating details of heretofore secret operations.

Smith also tells for the first time the part that Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini played as a key Vatican agent in a complex American espionage network that collected secret intelligence in Tokyo. Montini now is Pope Paul VI.

The OSS was a mixed bag, Smith records, headed by a millionaire, the World War I hero and Wall Street lawyer William J. (Wild Bill) Donovan. It numbered many millionaires on its roster, as well as White Russians, New Dealers, conservatives and radicals.

But Smith thinks it had something the CIA could use today.

"The CIA has not yet become the reactionary monster the new left has created as its straw man," he writes. "But unless the agency leadership makes a determined effort to renew the OSS passion for democratic dissent in yet another generation of American intelligence officers, the reality of CIA may soon coincide with its sinister image in the intellectual community."

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